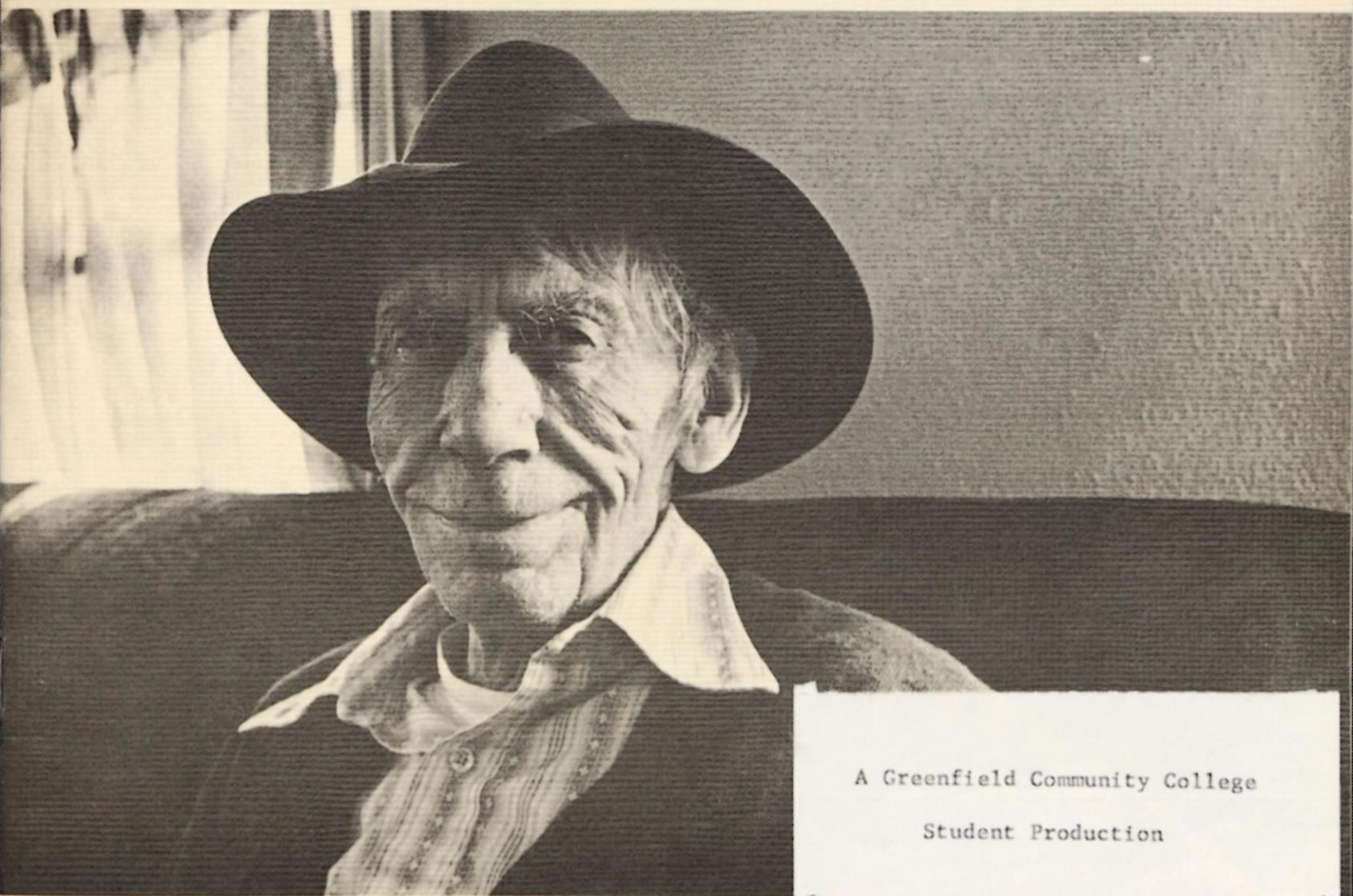


STRONG POINTS

75¢

A LITERARY AND VISUAL MAGAZINE



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Student Production

PHOTO BY RICHARD KATZ



Klaus Schmitz

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RED RAIN:

A VIETNAM VET REMEMBERS

Paul Lastowski served in Vietnam in 1971 and 1972. He was a Navy Corpsman, a medic, with a Marine unit. He is presently a freshman at G.C.C. studying to be a nurse.

by Howard Singer

Howard: I say Vietnam. What comes to mind?

Paul: Fear. Gives me a lot of thoughts.

Howard: These thoughts come and go?

Paul: I've gotten to the point now where I really don't think about Vietnam...but when somebody asks me questions relating to what happened there, the first thing...is fear. When I first came back if I heard a chopper go overhead I had to stop and think about where I was, what's around me and what's gonna happen. When I hear a chopper, I automatically think something's gonna happen. This one chopper stands out in my mind, the gun ship...it had mortar, it had rockets, it had two 50-caliber machine guns and at night if you were in the bush and somebody hollered that puff was coming over, puff would open up and I mean in a black sky it looked like rain, red rain. I've got a picture of it somewhere at home. I wish I could find it; I'd bring it in if I could find it. Each red dot...there's five shots in between each red dot and it looks like it's raining when puff came over to get the V.C. If the rain didn't get them, they'd open up with the rockets or the mortar and if that didn't do it...I mean if someone down there got away from the rockets and the bullets and the flame...you just can't imagine what it's like to see five square acres on fire....

Howard: You're still physically affected by all the fear?

Paul: What I saw and what I did...at the first sound of a chopper it just comes back and you have to stop and figure out where you are and what's around you.

Howard: What was your job in Vietnam?

Paul: Medivac corpsman. Ship to shore. My duty was four on four off, 24 hours a day for six out of every seven days. I'd go wherever they radioed in, where there was wounded. I'd go out, pick up what I could, fly them back to the hospital.

Howard: Pick up what you could?

Paul: Guys that were wounded, yeah. You found everything.

Howard: How long did you do this?

Paul: Almost two years.

Howard: And you were how old?

Paul: Nineteen.

Howard: The same age as a lot of your classmates are now.

Paul: Right.

Howard: Do you talk about Vietnam with your classmates?

Paul: Not really. Except for the times in your class. There's really no way to relate to them.

Howard: What does today's college freshman know about Vietnam?

Paul: Just what they read in the papers. What their teachers told them in school. The way I see it, somebody who was eight years old at the time...has no concept of what I've been through. They might think they have an idea from television and news or from looking at pictures in books and papers, hearing what their parents told them, but I really believe they have no actual concept of what happened.

Howard: Do you resent that?

Paul: Yes and no. We came back and people made us off to be guys who wanted to be there. I didn't want to go any more than you did but I was unlucky in the draft lottery and I pulled a 3. I didn't have much of a choice.

Howard: How would you counsel a nineteen-year-old if he came to you and asked advice about serving in the military?

Paul: First, I wouldn't know how to counsel somebody like that but if I were to talk to somebody who was gung ho on going over somewhere and doing what he thought he had to do, I would advise him to stay the hell out of it because my average classmate right now has no idea what a combat situation is all about.

Howard: What do you believe a typical freshman thinks about war?

Paul: Again, I'd have to say they have no concept on it. You know, they just don't understand what it's all about, the destruction.

Howard: Destruction?

Paul: The bombing I witnessed. The mortar fire and the flame throwers, the dead bodies.

Howard: Like the way it's portrayed in the movies?

Paul: No.

Howard: What's the difference?

Paul: The difference? In combat, you see a whole lot more than you see on the screen.

Howard: What does it feel like to be in combat?

Paul: My first feeling was fear.

Howard: Fear in terms of...

Paul: Am I gonna make it?

Howard: Are you gonna live?

Paul: Yeah. Am I gonna live or am I gonna end up laying on the field like somebody else.

Howard: And you felt this fear day after day?

Paul: Yeah.

Howard: Did you ever grow numb to it?

Paul: No.

Howard: The fear remained at an equal intensity or did it increase?

Paul: Depending on what type situation I was in it did increase from time to time, but I was always afraid, always. As a matter of fact when I came back I did two months at a VA hospital just to get my head back together.

Howard: Most combat vets needed some kind of recovery period, didn't they?

Paul: Well, when I came back not only the sound of a chopper but a loud sudden noise scared the shit out of me, you know. I turned around ready to kill somebody and I just couldn't handle the situation, I couldn't handle the silence...like when I couldn't sleep, you know, I'd sleep for an hour and I'd wake up thinking about something that I saw and it's kinda hard to say but a lot of nights I'd just sit there and think and you felt that you were all alone, I felt that I was all alone. I have a very hard time relating to people who weren't there. Something that I did learn there was mistrust.

Howard: What do you mean by mistrust?

Paul: I don't trust a whole lot of people

Howard: Can a classmate become one of your friends?

Paul: I think just about anybody could get to know me, you know, through mutual interests or just talking.

Howard: Would Vietnam be discussed at some point?

Paul: No, I'd rather not, I don't like to have to talk about it.

Howard: Shouldn't an 18- or 19-year-old know something about it?

Paul: I think he should, yeah.

Howard: How's he going to learn?

Paul: Talk to people. Visit a VA hospital. Don't volunteer for military service just to find out what a situation like that is all about.

Howard: So what you're saying is that you spent two intense years in an environment that remains undiscussed and even unknown to a large majority of the people you interact with every day?

Paul: Exactly. Exactly. I don't think it's something you can just discuss with someone who has no idea what happened.

Howard: Do you think college history courses should teach Vietnam?

Paul: No.

Howard: Just ignore it?

Paul: If it's gonna be discussed, it should be talked about by somebody who's been through it.

Howard: Should Vietnam be taught by Vietnam vets?

Paul: That might be a good thing. Students would have a different outlook.

Howard: If you were in a position to help design a course about Vietnam, to be in a position to give today's freshman a sense of awareness, to be able to communicate the essence of the experience...what would you include?

Paul: The only important thing to teach a freshman is the bullshit of the politics. I think it's immaterial for anyone to know too much about the blood and the guts.

Howard: Why?

Paul: Disfigurement and all that is nothing that the average person should ever have to see.

Howard: But isn't that what most of the people want to know about when they talk to a vet?

Paul: Yeah and that's why the average vet won't talk to them about blood and gore and will just shut you off and walk away. The most important thing to tell freshmen is the fact that it was a political war and yet guys like me...19 years old, kids, we weren't there because we wanted to be...but because we were ordered to go by the politicians, and the majority of the guys I know who were there really don't know the real story why we were there. We know it was a "conflict." It was a war but the government says it was a conflict and I still don't know the reasons why we were there.

Howard: You went through the brutal experiences of war and even now you don't understand why?

Paul: I did what I was told to do.

Howard: And you ended up in a form of hell?

Paul: A hell I can't discuss with anybody. The average person has no idea what it was like. Just to go out hunting and hear a shot go off scares you.

Howard: Do you hunt now?

Paul: No.

Howard: Could you?

Paul: No, I don't even own a weapon. I did but I got rid of all my stuff. When I came back from Nam after I did my second hitch, I landed at Travers Air Force base. I had 90 days to go before I was discharged and a group of guys I was with, the first thing we wanted to do was go out and get wasted so we went to a bar. It was during the time when hippies were in...the long hair...and people in the bar made us out to be like...like killers, like I enjoyed going over there and killing somebody. I don't recall having killed anybody but they made you out to feel that way and I got into a fight with this guy and yeah...I think probably a lot of people, my fellow classmates, might think of me as a killer but I'm not. I don't recall ever having fired a shot at anybody but a lot of people have that impression of me, yeah. Then again it makes it much harder to relate to these people.

Howard: You were a soldier and you were supposed to be like John Wayne, another tough guy, but on the other hand we're afraid of tough guys, aren't we?

Paul: I agree with that. John Wayne the killer and the hero. A lot of the guys I was with thought we were heroic but when we came home we were treated like we all wanted to go there just to blow somebody away, which wasn't the truth.

Howard: Would you want your son to go to war?

Paul: My kid? My son? No. I personally would take my son to Canada.

Howard: And this isn't the way you felt before you went in?

Paul: If I knew then what I know now I'd have gone down there and told them, "Look, I'm not going".

Howard: I get the feeling that you don't think that the military is a totally bad experience but you're frustrated because you served in a military action that was unclear, which might have been more clear if the rules were stated.

Paul: Right, I was lucky. I didn't get hit. My brother got hit. He's got a three-inch piece of shrapnel in his head and he's got a choice now—take it out and he might be O.K. or take it out and he might become a vegetable. He also has a wife and kids, he don't wanna take a bad chance but depending on how he feels and depending on his immediate surroundings, some days he knows me and some days he doesn't and you can't help...you can't help but think about it. I mean my brother's only two years older than me. We grew up together. We shared the same room, called the same people mom, dad, and some days he doesn't know who the hell we are.

Howard: You're constantly reminded about Vietnam and you're interacting with classmates and teachers who never think about it.

Paul: Exactly. Some G.I.'s developed the attitude it was O.K. just to blow people away. Most of us have a hard time with the readjustment.

Howard: Readjustment?

Paul: Yeah, I had a hard time. I couldn't sleep at night.

Howard: And from what you're saying, it's going to be difficult to ever really make a complete transition. This transition is never really going to end.

Paul: I was talking to a friend one night about the gun ships and my wife related it to our wood stove. The green wood I had cut last Spring for this year didn't burn so she asked how the trees and live bush could burn, you know...in Vietnam. The thing was that between the rockets and the flame, it was so intense that no matter what was there it went and then you'd go out later on and find what it took. It erased everything. Not only life but the trees, the grass, the snakes, the dogs, the kids, the women. That was another thing in Nam...I mean...even kids...you think of kids here as innocent and not knowing anything but I saw a little boy who was maybe twelve go into a bar I'd left and I found out later he had two grenades under his arms and all he did was lift his arms up and he blew himself and everybody in the bar away. It was their culture. You really gotta be dedicated to the cause or you gotta be sick, and getting back to my fellow students — they have no idea...

Howard: To them, it's just frisbee and loud music?

Paul: A few beers and a couple of joints and maybe a job in a few years.

Howard: And what about you? You have good grades. What kind of job are you aiming for?

Paul: I'm going to be a nurse. After all the things I've seen, been through...maybe I can't say it's been all bad because I'm going to be a lot more experienced than the average nurse who comes right out of college. I'll be ready. I should be able to handle just about anything. ■

Neil L.—

Thanks for
the Newspaper
Memories!

your READERS

The popular movie line, "Love means never having to say you're sorry," never seemed to apply in my family. Soon after my mother gave birth to me, for example, my father, having seen his newborn son, entered her hospital room and remarked, "I'm sorry." Ever since then my life has been full of one "sorry" after another.

When I was five, I had to tell the little girl next door I was sorry for pulling down her pants, and the kindergarten teacher was sorry I couldn't put my rubbers on by myself.

SORRY ABOUT THAT

When I was six, my brother was sorry he hit me in the head with his Tonka truck, and my mother was sorry I never ate my turnips.

When I was seven, I told my mom I was sorry I still wet the bed, and told my dad I was sorry I snapped the radio antenna off his Dodge.

When I was eight, I told my sister I was sorry I set her hair on fire, and apologized and pleaded for mercy to my big brother for breaking his brand new, three-speed, Stingray bike.

When I was nine, the neighborhood bully said "Sorry, man" whenever he beat the pulp out of me, and my friend David could only say sorry when his dog Checkers nearly clawed off my upper lip (13 stitches!).

When I was ten, my friend Joe looked sorry as I regained consciousness after

getting hit in the head with his wicked fastball, and I told my friend John I was sorry I clipped a clothespin on the tail of his cat.

When I was eleven, I told my older brother I was sorry for barging into the bathroom while he and his girlfriend were sharing the tub, and I told my mom I was sorry for accidentally giving the dog that evening's meatloaf. ("It looked like Alpo!")

When I was twelve, I was sorry for burning up the front seat of my mother's station wagon with a smoke bomb, and

each time I asked for the car, and my dad replied sorry each time I asked for money.

When I was seventeen, I said sorry to my mom after I got drunk and jumped off the porch roof at my sister's party, and a neighborhood mother was sorry when she caught a bunch of us "streaking" to a nearby swimming pool late one summer evening.

When I was eighteen, I was sorry I joined the Navy, and my high school class was sorry I was the only one to fall down the graduation podium steps.

When I was nineteen, I told my sister I was sorry she was dating a lunatic, and my brother claimed to be sorry for totalling my '68 Ford.

When I turned twenty, I was sorry I was in the middle of the Atlantic on board the USS NIMITZ, and everybody said they were sorry for never writing to me.

When I was twenty-one, I was sorry the attractive woman in the Spanish nightdrub was actually a lady of the evening, and she was sorry I had no money or courage.

When I was twenty-two, my naval squadron was sorry to see me go, and my family was sorry to see me come.

When I was a college student at twenty-three, I was sorry my VW Bug's floor fell out, and I was even more sorry I replaced the VW with a Chevy Vega.

And now, at twenty-four, the Editor of this magazine is quite sorry I submitted this article, and . . . well, I'm sorry about that. If this attempted humor happens to offend or depress anybody . . . or if it doesn't seem to be all that funny . . . I'm sorry. ■

HUMOR
by Wid Perry

my pal Joe was sorry for chipping my front tooth with a coke bottle.

When I was thirteen, I told my brother I was sorry for running over his "weeds" with the lawn mower, and a beautiful girl of my dreams was sorry when I mentioned, much to her disgust, that I was in love with her.

When I was fourteen, the doctor was sorry to inform me I had terminal acne, and I was sorry I made my friend Tom eat grass (lawn).

When I was fifteen, my sister said sorry when I asked her to fix me up with one (or, any) of her girlfriends, and my "friend" Jim said he was sorry he was taking the girl of my dreams to the prom.

When I was sixteen, my mom said sorry



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BOW HUNTING - A CHALLENGE OF WITS

Dusk and dawn — the time of seeking the quiet of pine groves, walking soundlessly, fearing to breathe too loudly. I hope to have the wind blow toward me as I search for a glimpse of the elusive White Tail deer. The instinct and cunning of this animal can test the best skills of the bow hunter. This beautiful animal has the advantage of moving across crisp, dry leaves without making a sound; the ability to hear a pin drop and pick up a scent 500 yards away; the cunning and shrewdness to sense danger.

I've seen a buck and doe go behind a hill, then the doe slowly emerge. The buck appears to sense he is the one being hunted, knowing I won't let the arrow go from the string until he appears. He never appears. The realization hits me that I've been set up. The buck has disappeared behind the hill in the other direction, unseen.

Tracking and familiarization with the territory is time-consuming and often in the bitter cold, but the excitement of sitting in a tree watching as two or three flags run past makes me feel elated and depressed at the same time. I've found the right spot but it has gotten too dark to see my sights and bag one tonight. But they are there! Tomorrow morning I'll come back at the first wisps of dawn to the same stand and hope they haven't caught my scent and detoured to another feeding spot.

Another brisk late afternoon I walk along the edge of the woods next to a meadow. As the sun sets low in the sky, I see him — a 10-point rack adorning his beautiful head. He is grazing. I'm 50 yards away and the pounding of my heart surely will drive him away. I place a mitten over my chest to muffle the sound. The buck shakes his tail before bringing his head up, inhales the area, shakes his tail again and lowers his head to graze. I walk closer, my arrow notched, steady. The breeze is coming my way; I'm 35 yards away. Will the flag go up and blow my chance? He's sniffing again and the tail wiggles but the head lowers again! Next, a shake; his head is up. We're face to face...the ultimate challenge. The string is drawn. Man and animal are brought back to the crude existence and struggle that once determined survival.

The buck is still unaware of my presence. The breeze is with me and dusk makes his poor vision even less effective. He sniffs the air, wary but still comfortable in his grazing. The realization shocks me that this animal that has eluded me 100 times before, the subject of stories and disappearances that would astound the best of hunters, this incredible, survival-oriented quarry — is but 35 yards away and is looking directly at me! I finally have the chance to take advantage of that one sense that God did not bless this awesome creature with — his eyesight!

Maybe too many thoughts are crowding my mind, pounding through my head. They may be my downfall. Maybe it will be

by Muriel A. Tibbets

the wind turning against me that will stop me. I watch my bright orange fletching at the end of my arrow, hear it whistle by, inches from the startled buck's chest. A loud snort is heard and the flag goes up. Milliseconds later where once this magnificent buck stood facing me, there is nothing. All of a sudden my bones feel the chill of the early winter breeze. My nose is running and I feel the throb in my left arm where I held the 55-pound draw for what seemed like an eternity.

Returning the arrow to the quiver, the lonely walk home begins. I wonder how long it will be — or if ever — that I will have another opportunity like this one.

As I hasten my steps to warm shelter, I agree with my inner self that I'll not bother telling this hunting story because the intensity of the experience has disappeared in the woods with the flag ■

When someone cannot explain his actions, one percent of the time it is because he has incredible psychic powers; 99 percent of the time he is just plain stupid.

F. Agnir



Photo by Matt Carty

To a Stranger

I see you almost everywhere, night and day,
and never have a fear of losing you.
A touch of recognition on a darkened midnight bus,
a faint sign of desperation reaching my own
an extended stare as we pass on the street
and a bumping of shoulders as we compress ourselves
in the crowd.

You will never frustrate me, smother me,
put me down or wear on my tattered nerves
and I will never hate the way you eat.
Our relationship will last only seconds,
a momentary exuberance.

You accidentally let the door fall back on me today.
"Excuse me," you said, and I nodded,
thinking how much I loved you.

Amy L. Clough



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A ROLLING STONE GATHERS DOUGH

by Peter Randall

Move over, Beatles! What began as hard rock's "alternative" to pop-music's Beatlemania has been parlayed by The Rolling Stones into the single biggest happening in rock history: The Rolling Stones 1981 U.S. Tour.

On a Friday afternoon in late September the Stones Tour opened before 90,000 screaming fans at old JFK Stadium in Philadelphia. As the ten-week, 28-city tour progressed, one thing became apparent: this is not just Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Bill Wyman, Ron Woods and Charlie Watts in concert, but, rather, one of the shrewdest business deals ever engineered. It is a deal masterminded by Jagger himself and many speculate it will be the richest undertaking the music world has ever known.

This year marks a resurgence for the Rolling Stones. In recent years the band had become "trendy," following others instead of sticking with the rock 'n blues music that made them "The Greatest Rock 'N Roll Band in the World." Some blamed the decline on Jagger's marital problems while others

maintained the group had "burned themselves out" after nearly two decades. But for anyone who has heard their latest album, "Tattoo You," it is obvious that the Rolling Stones are anything but burned out musically.

The bottom line is not that the Stones are a musical phenomenon again; rather, they are a business phenomenon and, at 38, Jagger knows this. That is why the group tours only once every three years so they won't suffer from overexposure. Jagger also maintains that there is a new generation of rock fans every three years which has been enticed and charmed by the Stones. Thus, by touring irregularly they create a mood of anticipation and expectation, which in turn spells dollars.

A closer look at the U.S. Tour shows the group raking in profits in nine figures between September and December:

- Jovan Cologne of Chicago agreed to underwrite the group's hotel and travel expenses in return for the use of the Jovan logo on tour posters and

billing on radio spots. This stands to save Jagger and friends about \$3 million.

- The 43 show tour will be seen by about two million people at \$15.75 a ducat for a gross profit of over \$30 million. One Stones' zealot paid \$25 for his ticket, but knew it was worth every cent of it when "the opening strains of 'Start Me Up' boomed out of Keith Richards' guitar."

- The album "Tattoo You" has been selling about 300,000 copies a week and an estimated five million will be sold by Christmas, according to the New York Daily News. The singles, "Start Me Up," "Hang Fire" and "Waiting for a Friend" have passed the million mark at \$1.50 each. The recent hype will also boost sales of previous Stones' LP's. Extensive air play on Pop and Rock AM/FM stations throughout the world will increase sales along with air time royalties. All of those elements can mean up to \$60 million.

- The Stones will pull in another \$30 million from merchandising posters, programs, buttons and T-shirts that sell for almost as much as a concert seat (\$15) and are available at all shows.

Finally, it should be noted that the group plans to wrap up the historic tour with a show for dignitaries at a New York City club. They also plan to beam the show via satellite to 200 selected clubs in the United States and Canada with ticket prices identical to the \$15.75 concert charge. The two hour gig will gross some \$11 million.

The combined kitty for all the above is the incredible gross of \$128 million — not bad for ten weeks of work, and all of this orchestrated by a graying businessman named Mick Jagger, the same Mick Jagger who can incite a riot with his energetic and emotional on-stage behavior while in concert. No one can argue the fact that the Rolling Stones Tour would be a success whether Jagger was calling the shots or not. The band's name is synonymous with rock, it can sell itself. But give Jagger credit. He saw the opportunity to make the tour, possibly their last, into a gold mine and he exploited it through promotion and build-up. By bombarding radio and newspapers with information on the Rolling Stones and concert dates, Jagger made every rock'n roll fan in the country think he or she had to see the Stones' show and be a part of their following. That's what business is all about. Make the people think they need what you have. Mick has been a master at it.

The Rolling Stones proved something else with the 1981 Tour. They showed everyone that they truly are the "Greatest Rock 'N Roll Band in the World." The Stones are the Kings of Rock and the legend continues to grow.

Band member Keith Richards was once quoted as saying, "When we started this band we thought we had two or three years and that would be it." Now, twenty years later, the Stones are still rolling and there is no end in sight. ■

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OLD AGE IS NOT A DISEASE

by Vincent Michael Valvo

Once you were active. You loved to ski, to swim, to backpack. You were full of bright ideas and the world listened to you. Your body was sleek, tall and graceful. You were ambitious, and the job market was receptive to your talents. All the joys of life were yours for the taking.

Now you are withered and bent. Your mind is still sharp, but few will listen to you, much less acknowledge your presence at all. Disease is disabling your body and all you feel now is embittering frustration.

It's hell growing old. Many of us have the majority of our lives still ahead to enjoy. But what about the way we treat those who have already been through it?

In September, "College Bound," a publication of the *Amherst Record*, printed an article by an elderly Amherst resident requesting that the hordes of returning college students take a moment to consider how they have treated the local senior citizens. He attempted to get them to understand the situation we may all find ourselves in someday.

I work with elderly persons who, in some way, need help to take care of themselves. I see people who are being ostracized from active service in society, sometimes in their own family, only because they cannot physically function as easily as before.

None of the people that I work with are mentally deficient.

They simply are growing old and falling prey to ailments that science has yet to find cures for. In addition, all are dependent on government programs for financial aid and other services in order to meet their monetary obligations, because inflation and soaring medical costs have made a mockery of whatever retirement plans they might have had.

Several colleges are now offering courses in the study of geriatric problems. One institution "handicaps" its students for a day: smeared glasses for dimming eyesight, fingers taped together to simulate arthritis, weighted shoes and having to use "walkers" to maneuver anywhere. All the students involved in the exercise reported feeling out of place, frustration, awkwardness, embarrassment and a greater feeling of empathy toward our older citizens.

There are social service agencies which aid the elderly, but they cannot change the way



Kris Schmitt

crippling pain, to be shut out from family and society, to be in financial desperation, to have to rely on others for the most menial of tasks, to have a vibrant mind in a decaying body and to still fight to make the most of whatever precious time is left.

There is senility. We cannot deny this, but not everyone with a senior citizen's discount card has it. Elderly people are just that: people. Each should be assessed individually on the person inside, not on the cosmetic appearance outside. There will come a time when we will all be old. Do we wish to be in the same situation many of our grandparents are in today? Like any problem we face, only we can determine the outcome. ■

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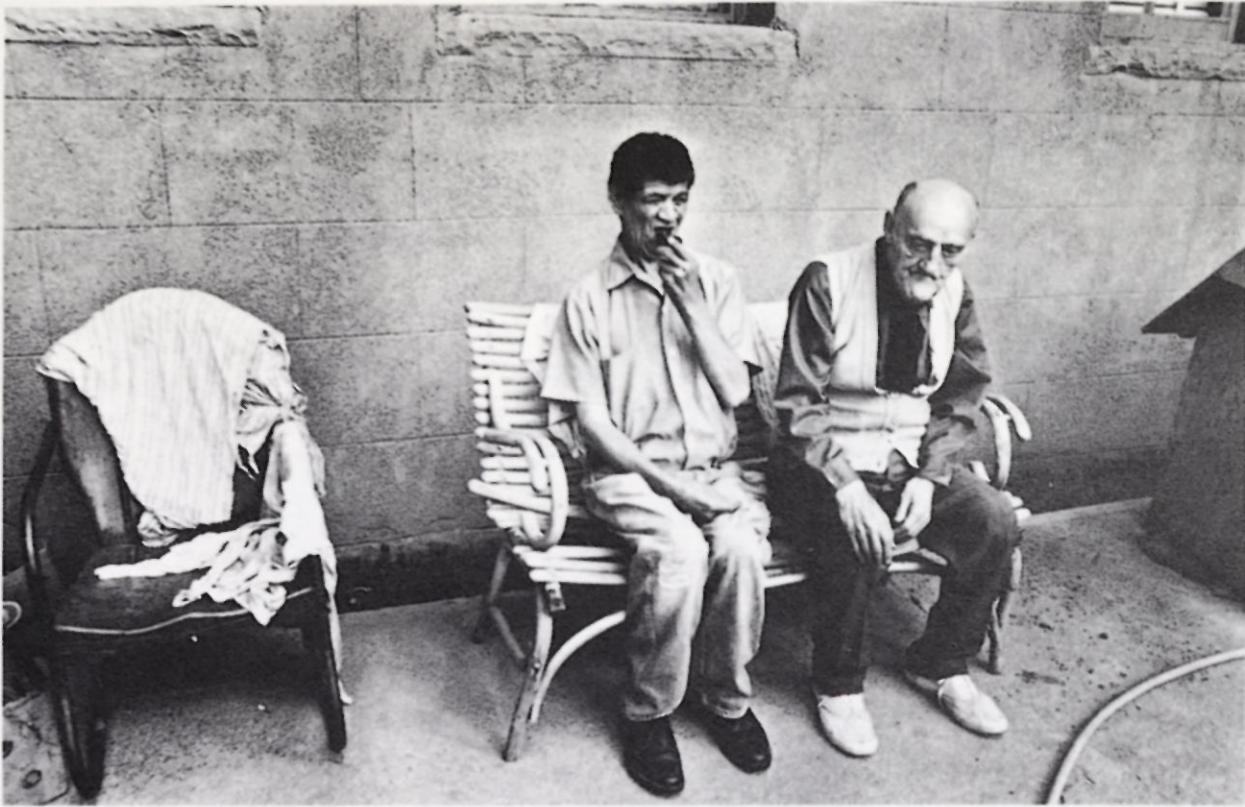
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RICHARD M. KATZ



Richard M. Katz first became interested in photography about ten years ago when he took an introductory course at Greenfield Community College.

After attending colleges and universities directly after high school and dropping out because of dissatisfaction with the formal structure of higher education, Katz found himself drafted into the army. Richard returned to school and received an associate's degree in liberal arts from Greenfield Community College after completing his tour of duty in 1970. Before

continuing his education, he felt he wanted to see the country so he set out touring the United States. He headed south to Florida, sometimes staying with families, other times settling long enough in places to earn enough money to continue his trip.

By the fall of 1972, Richard found himself in Colorado. Winter was approaching so he decided to settle in Cripple Creek, taking a job in a local nursing home.

While there, Richard worked with the patients and got to know them intimately. "I drifted into their lives...and some of their feelings. I saw how they arrived at that point

in life. There was a loneliness about them...yet there was something else...lives that existed, that had slowed down. A reflection of the last stop or the next-to-last. Many of their dreams were never actualized; some had been fulfilled."

When Richard returned to Massachusetts, he worked on seasonal jobs and attended the University of Massachusetts. He worked for the Boston and Maine railroad from 1976 to 1980. Now 33, Richard Katz is a Greenfield resident and a part-time student at G.C.C.





The Artist:

I love
his hands
so soft
so strong

I love
his hands
creating life
in all
to measure
to save

I love
his hands
touching
my legs
my thigh
my breast

I love
his hands
holding my heart
not too tight
but enough
to know
I'm loved

Muriel Tibbers



The Giant

Ameeba
vs.
Black Hole



•

AUSINAROS

For Sharon

One of the rats in Sharon's apartment
has just grown tall enough
to open the refrigerator without the help of a footstool.
That's quite an occasion.
She celebrated with a new box of dog bones.
They're rich in vitamin K, she says.

Togetherness Shaken

Even in the mist
of you
I am alone
the shadow of togetherness
has shaken
my thoughts free.

Mary Jane Kuzniarski

Wet Birds

On rainy days
The swallows hunker down
On the telephone wire
Like old jacks or the bar
Of the City Cafe, slumped
Over their shots and beers.

Some face this way, others
That. They don't say much.
Once in a while one of them
Will shake the drop of water
Off the end of his nose and
Let out with a disgruntled chirp.

Then he'll hunch his shoulders
And pull in his big thick head, again,
And go back to brooding about
Yesterday, when the sun was shining,
And they all did impossible feats
Of daring, in the warm blue sky.

John Colgan



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Lee Tibbets

Packing

The white sweater now
turning grey
like some aging rumor
hangs in the back of the closet
secluded
like some arrogant hermit
or another Emily Dickinson.
The solemnness of its wool
is insulted by eight
pink buttons
like a troop of clowns crashing
a cocktail party.
The long sleeves fuzzier than chicken down
that used to follow
every motion of the dry bony arms
like a pair of white shadows
now lay more still and limp
than Grandma on her last day.
The sweater was last to come
out of the dark mouthed closet.
It fell off the hanger easier
than a satin slip
and was packed into a paper bag
to be thrown
into some Good Will box.
I wouldn't want to wear
a dead person's clothes.

Sandra Emmons

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HALF - DEAD

by Wid Perry

Twelve-year-old Milt found the mangled cat sprawled lifelessly in a clump of brush alongside Route 55 while scouting for returnable soda bottles and other useful rubbish. With him was his eleven-year-old side kick/scouting partner, Joey Bonds.

Milt and Joey Bonds combed this area just about every Saturday, despite the repeated warnings of Milt's mother who feared the boys would either get mowed down by a runaway 22 wheeler or kidnapped and assaulted by some vagabond motorist. Milt's mother watched a lot of late, late movies.

Milt had been leaning over to pick up a dented license plate from Missouri when he noticed the motionless animal lying to his right. He instinctively jumped back and examined the unfortunate victim from a safe distance. Dead animals gave Milt the creeps.

It was a tiger cat — orange stripes with white paws — with a deep wound on its belly, one ear nearly torn off, blood oozing from its nose, puss surrounding its closed eyes, and dried cakes of blood and dirt covering much of its body. Milt concluded it had either been run over by a Ford Galaxie or beaten up by an egotistical dog. Maybe even both!

"Got a dead cat here!" Milt called to Joey Bonds, who had been watching a small army of victorious ants carry a dead caterpillar towards their nearby hole for supper. Joey Bonds joined Milt at the scene of the crime.

"He's not dead," Joey Bonds announced after a few minutes of silent staring.

"How do you know?"

"Cause he's not all stiff. Besides, his eyes are closed. All dead animals have open eyes."

"What do you mean all stiff?" Milt asked.

"When my Aunt Josie's cat Simon croaked, he was stiff as a board when they found him. Feet sticking up in the air like telephone poles."

"Really?"

"Sure," replied Joey Bonds. "Nope, this cat ain't dead by a long shot."

Milt picked up a stick and gently poked the cat. "He's soft," reported Milt.

"Feel him with your hand," suggested Joey Bonds.

"With my hand? Yech!"

"See if he's warm. If he's warm, he's alive for sure," explained Joey Bonds.

Milt slowly leaned over and cautiously touched the cat. "He's warm," announced Milt.

"He's alive, then."

"Well, we can't leave him here if he's alive," decided Milt.

"I can't take him home," replied Joey Bonds. "My sister gets sick and her hair falls out whenever dogs or cats are around."

"I'll take him, then," said Milt. He felt sorry for the poor sap cat.

The boys carefully placed the unconscious cat inside an empty Budweiser beer carton to carry him to safety. When they reached Milt's house, Milt put the carton down on the back porch to ponder his next move. He saw his mother through the kitchen door making strawberry jello for his seven-year-old sister, Alaine. He knew Alaine would not be very receptive toward a mangled cat, especially since the stupid cat from next door ate her

parakeet, Wally, three years ago.

"Hi, Mrs. Williams!" shouted the idiot Joey Bonds before Milt could stop him.

Milt's mother came to the door. "Hello, boys," she said with a smile. The smile quickly disappeared when she glanced down at the box. "What do you have there?"

"A cat!" said stupid Joey Bonds. Milt wished he had a pair of pliers so he could yank out Joey Bonds' tongue.

Milt's mother frowned. "What kind of cat?" she asked.

"A mauled one!" laughed Joey Bonds.

"Don't you have to go feed the

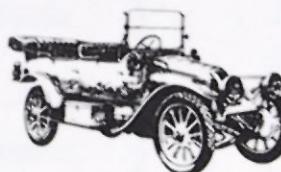


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Wid Perry

Half-Dead

chickens, Joey?" Milt sarcastically asked.

Joey Bonds looked blankly at Milt.

"Chickens? What chickens?"

"Forget it."

Here we go again, thought Milt's mother as she peered into the box to examine another in a continuing series of wayward, injured, lost, or on-the-run animals brought home by one of her warmhearted, yet naive, children. It was during times like this that Milt's mother wished she had become a nun!

"I know what you're gonna say, Mom, and I wish you wouldn't," said Milt before his mother had the opportunity to begin her "We Don't Need Another Pet" speech. "Look at him. He's hurt. We can't leave him to die all alone on the side of the highway, can we? I mean, how would you like to die that way?"

"Milt-on."

"Mother."

"But are you ready for another pet so soon?" Milt's mother was making reference to the family's late pet Rufus, a stupid, but extremely loveable, mutt who had been killed two months earlier when he ran into a telephone pole while chasing the Roto-Rooter truck. Milt had been crushed by the loss and for several days he did little, if anything, in terms of activity, which worried Milt's mother very much. Thankfully, Milt slowly recovered from his depression and was soon back to normal (normal for Milt, anyway), although he would get queasy whenever he saw a Roto-Rooter truck and he'd feel sad whenever the Lorne Greene Alpo commercials came on TV.

Milt's mother stared into her son's pathetically sad and pleading eyes. How could she possibly say no?

She sighed with resignation and gave in. "All right then, I won't stop you. But you're the one who will be responsible for it, not me." Milt and Joey Bonds exchanged triumphant smiles.

The young rescuers set up cat quarters in the cellar next to the hot water heater, filling an old milk crate with a tattered blanket and several ragged sheets as bedding.

"What are you going to name him?"

Joey Bonds asked Milt after they had made the cat comfortable.

"Name? Gee, I haven't given it much

thought," said Milt.

"How about Rufus II?" suggested Joey Bonds.

"No," said Milt. He would never insult the memory of Rufus by naming some scroungy cat after him. "I think I'll name him Half-Dead," said Milt after a few minutes of thought.

"Half-Dead?" Joey Bonds asked.

"Well, he was half-dead when we found him, right?"

"Yeah."

"So the name fits."

Half-Dead regained consciousness the next morning, opening one dazed green eye at a time and glancing about confusedly as if to ask, "Where the heck am I?" By the second morning, he was gingerly strolling around exploring his new home and introducing himself to his new family. He said hello to Milt's mother by peeing behind the refrigerator.

It didn't take Half-Dead very long to

Half-Dead could be friendly and loveable when he wanted to be. The three youngsters knew it was okay to pick him up and cuddle him only when he was in the mood. Any other time would result in a claw-job. Half-Dead occasionally sacked out on Milt's bed, but usually elected to sleep under the living room sofa or (of all places) on top of the wall-sized bookcase in the den.

While Half-Dead enjoyed a cautiously friendly relationship of mutual respect and understanding with the three children and Milt's father, he had apparently declared war on Milt's mother. It seemed that the two were constantly at odds. Milt heard his mother threaten Half-Dead's life at least 27 times in one week alone. It seemed Half-Dead purposely and routinely got on the already frayed nerves of Milt's mother (being a mom is never easy) by dragging dead mice, baby rabbits, birds, and



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establish himself within the Williams' household. He was aloof, stoic, temperamental, extremely self-centered, and very independent, with little regard for hugging, kissing, holding and other human tortures.

"I liked the stupid dog better than this stuck-up cat!" proclaimed Lisa, Milt's eleven-year-old sister whose biggest laugh used to be watching Rufus chase flies around the back yard.

chipmunks onto the back porch, knocking over various artifacts around the house, chewing up chair covers, meowing on the roof at 3 a.m., leaving muddy paw prints all over the car, wrecking the garden's flower beds, and trying to swipe fish from the aquarium.

"I hate that damn cat!" Milt's mother would declare at least once a day, usually when Half-Dead insisted on peeing behind the refrigerator, even though the smelly kitty-litter box was no more than ten feet away. Milt's mother was convinced he did it just to spite her!

The closest Milt's mother ever came to actual murder was on the day Half-Dead ate the salmon supper she had left on top of the stove while talking with Mrs. Archibald, the Avon Lady, in the living room. Milt's mother became so enraged when she discovered Half-Dead licking his chops over the empty casserole dish, she threw the electric can opener at him from across the kitchen. She missed Half-Dead, but scored a perfect hit on the cookie jar Milt had given her for Mother's Day the year before. Shattered pieces of cookie jar and Oreos flew in every direction but Half-Dead was, of course, long gone.

"God, I hate that damn cat!" sighed Milt's mother to Mrs. Archibald, who had come rushing in from the living room upon hearing the loud crash. The family had scrambled eggs for supper that night.

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One quiet and peaceful Sunday morning, Milt's parents were interrupted from their therapeutic morning coffee and newspaper reading by the piercing sounds of screeching tires and the crucifying screams of Alaine. Hearts frantically pounding, they rushed out to the driveway to find Milt, followed by a teary-eyed Alaine, carrying a limp Half-Dead out of the street.

"I guess he didn't see the newspaper truck," sighed Milt.

"At least it wasn't a Roto-Rooter truck!" giggled a cold-hearted Lisa from the sidewalk.

"Half-Dead's all dead!" wailed Alaine.

Milt's mother threw her hands to her cheeks. "Oh no!" she exclaimed, gently taking the dead cat from Milt's grasp. "Oh, the poor baby!" she said with a sob. "I loved this poor cat."

Milt glanced questioningly at his father as his mother hugged the dead cat; everybody thought she had so despised. His father shrugged his shoulders as if to say, "Got me!"

The family held a brief service for Half-Dead under the two large oak trees in the backyard before burying him alongside Rufus, the gerbils, Wally the parakeet, the fish, Milt's turtle (Tiny), and all those nameless animals the children (and Half-Dead) had found and brought home over the years. Milt's father had buried enough animals to start his own pet cemetery!

Although everybody was saddened by the tragedy, nobody reacted quite the way Milt's mother did. She stood with tears rolling down her cheeks as her husband buried the cat. Milt couldn't help but feel a

little insulted. After all, she hadn't cried at Rufus' burial!

"I'm going to miss that cat," said Milt's mother with a heavy sigh as they walked back to the house after the burial was completed. "I really did love him."

Mothers, thought Milt. Who can understand them?

Later the same day as Milt's father helped his wife prepare Sunday dinner, Milt excitedly called from the back porch. "Mal Dadi Quick!"

The parents eyed one another as if to ask "What Now?" and, having no idea what to expect, cautiously walked out onto the back porch.

They certainly didn't expect to see Half-Dead but there he was — bright and alive as day — sitting on the porch steps contentedly licking his paws.

"You buried the wrong cat!" laughed Lisa.

"Half-Dead lives!" proclaimed Milt.

Milt's mother, rendered speechless, stood transfixed with her mouth hanging open.

"I love you, Half-Dead," said Alaine as she gleefully skipped into the house with the cat prancing in after her. Milt's grinning father led his stunned wife into the house with a laughing Milt and Lisa following behind them.

Half-Dead stopped in the middle of the kitchen, looked back at the group with what appeared to be a smirk on his face, swished his tail a few times, strolled over to the refrigerator and promptly peed before casually following Alaine into the living room.

Milt's mother dropped into a kitchen chair. "I hate that damn cat!" she muttered.

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Does baking bread intimidate you? Are you one of those misguided souls who believes that baking bread is tantamount to scaling the Pyrenees or understanding Einstein's theory? Do you envy those who smugly produce deliciously fragrant, golden loaves? Well, banish forever such thoughts from your mind! You're about to learn that baking bread is really very simple and, at the same time, a marvelously effective way to rid yourself of those petty, niggling irritations and aggravations that beset all of us in the course of our daily experiences.

To begin with, you need a simple recipe. If you don't already have one hidden away in your favorite cookbook or handed down from your grandmother, here's mine, courtesy of someone else's grandma:

Granny's Magic White Bread

2 c whole milk	½ c lukewarm water
1 stick butter or marg.	2 pkgs. dry yeast
½ cup sugar	1 egg
1 T salt	7 c unbleached flour

Tools: Saucepan, measuring cups and spoons, large mixing spoon, large bowl or pan, two large breadpans or three small ones, pastry brush or small piece of waxed paper, shortening, cooling racks, towel.

Assemble all the above ingredients and tools on your countertop before you begin, since this will avoid messy fingerprints on your cupboards and refrigerator later. (Remember, no frustrations!) Keep extra flour handy for dusting the countertop before you pour the dough mixture onto the prepared surface. Also, you might need to add a little more flour to the dough in the mixing bowl if it's too sticky to work with.

Now, rinse out the saucepan with warm water, drain, add the milk and place over medium heat. This will avoid two things: milk scum on the sides of the pan and scorched, spilled-over milk from too-high heat. As soon as the tiniest bubbles start to appear in the milk, remove from heat, add the butter (I use oleo), sugar and salt and stir well; then let mixture cool to lukewarm. Add the two packages of yeast to ½ cup of very warm but not hot water, stir well, and set in a warm place to work its leavening magic. (I turn my oven to "warm" and set the yeast mixture on the stove surface.) Be sure to place the milk mixture away from the heat, on a cool surface and even in a cool container if you'd like it to be ready faster.

When the milk mixture is lukewarm, add the egg, slightly beaten, and the yeast mixture (stirred again). Don't hesitate to scrape off all the yeast that clings to the spoon. Pour the combined liquid into your large bowl or pan, then add four cups of the flour. Mix well, then beat for two or three minutes as you would a


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Savings Bank**

thick cake or cookie dough. Now add the remaining three cups of flour and here's where I plunge in with my hands, squeezing, shaping, scraping flour off the sides of the pan, working it all together so that it's ready to be transferred intact onto the floured counter surface. Remember, if the dough's still too sticky, add a little more flour until it clings together well and doesn't leave a sticky, gooey mess on your hands. We're getting down to business at this point: Pour the dough out onto the counter, then start to knead. (Knead: To mix and work a substance into a uniform mass — and that's exactly what *needs* to be done.) If necessary, sprinkle a little more flour over the top and start pushing, pulling and pummeling. It's a veritable punching bag, yet a harmless form of physical and mental release: "Take that, you so-and-so!" "Have a slice of this, brother. Pow!" Leaven with your own words and let those hands, wrists, forearms and biceps get a workout while you drain off the tensions of the day.

Okay, feel better? Has it reached the satiny stage? Usually about fifteen minutes of vigorous kneading will get you to that point. Now take pity on the poor inert mass and let it rest for awhile, covered with a towel, while you scrape out the bowl or pan and grease it with the shortening. You can grease the breadpans now, too. Plop the temporarily slumbering mixture back into your greased bowl or pan, cover with the same towel, set it on the warm stove top and let it rise to about twice its height. Depending on the room surface temperature, this usually takes about an hour. You're free now to go off and do your own thing, bustling about with other chores, watching Donahue or twiddling your thumbs — whatever.

Back to the kitchen about an hour later and wow! it's ballooned way up and looks almost ready to spill over. Punch it down with a few well-aimed smacks, then pour it out onto the work surface again. Have at it with a few more kneading motions, then divide it into two or three parts, depending on your pan size, forming loaves to fit the pans. This is really a very simple operation — just fold the sides and ends under and pat the whole thing till it's smooth enough to suit you and shape it into the pans. Cover again with that same towel and let rise once more, but this time it doesn't have to double in size. The hot oven will finish the rising process after you pop it in. About 30 minutes should be enough this time. When the loaves are puffed up and look almost ready, turn your oven to 375°, then pop them in as soon as it reaches maximum heat.

(Let me interject here that if you're busy elsewhere and the dough mixture, either in the mixing bowl or the breadpans, has risen faster than you're ready to tend it, don't worry about a thing. Just punch it down and come back when you're ready. It's very compliant and will put up with sudden emergencies or dalliances without a whimper. I've punched it down as many as four different times and still had delectable bread.)

When you place the loaves into the oven, stagger them so that they'll receive uniform heat, staying away from the extreme edges of the grate. It generally takes about 30 minutes to produce the golden abundance, and I always open the oven door after about 20 minutes and revolve them for even baking. Now step back and assume Snoopy's blissful expression when he's contemplating the Red Baron's escapades. Just smell that heavenly aroma wafting through the place! If weather permits, open a few windows and let passersby sniff it too, but be prepared for some unexpected callers, big and little!

The loaves have reached their golden glory now, but just to make sure they're ready, tap them briskly with your index finger. Sound hollow? If not, give them a few more minutes. Now turn them out on the racks and brush with oleo or butter, using the pastry brush or waxed paper, and let them cool. If you can't resist cutting into a hot loaf and have a large, serrated-edge knife, have at it! Nothing, but *nothing* equals the taste of freshly baked bread, hot out of the oven, with butter dripping down its sides. Just think, you've produced your very own "staff of life" and rid yourself of a lot of frustrations, as well!

By now, I hope I've convinced you that it's EASY to bake bread. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. And more important, it's therapeutic. Forget the meditation, est, biofeedback, visualization techniques, yoga, primal therapy et al. and take a loaf...er...leaf from our forebears who couldn't run down to the corner store whenever they needed bread. Bake your own and feel the tensions draining away while that warm "toasty" feeling engulfs you (and speaking of toast, there's nothing finer...).

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by Wilson Roberts

You're dead, Eddie Perkins,
I've killed you thrice;
first when we were ten
and you pummeled me at recess time,
our snuffing, scuffling
encircled by other children,
skrilching ugly birds.
You smashed the lawyer's kid.
I hit your dusty sweaty face
once, I remember;
the only time I ever hit a face.
That night I killed you
and your nattering supporters;
just before sleep
I shattered classroom windows,
machine gunned you all down,
floors, walls, spattered
with bone, tissue, blood.

You're dead, Eddie Perkins,
I've killed you thrice,
second when we were twenty-four.
I saw you on the corner
watching concrete trucks
empty into bank foundations,
pigeons circling overhead,
as you waited for day's end.
Your wife was gone, you said.
You had not seen your son for six weeks;
you would stop drinking,
get them back, you said,
standing there alone,
only pigeons surrounding you.
Looking forward to three weeks on Tortola,
arms full of presents for my children,
chuckling in my down jacket,
I walked up the street,
never looking back on your remorse.

You're dead, Eddie Perkins,
I've killed you thrice.
A bright winter sun rose that Monday
they found you in the commons,
throat stopped with vomit,
eyes wide, red.
A lost gull circled the ground,
settling in the tree you lay beneath.
To your right Newtown Creek
flowed over rocks and dead wood;
to your left trucks and cars passed by.
Your son came running to your side
the moment street gossip told him how you
lay,
and held your hand,
tears on his sobless cheeks.

You're dead, Eddie Perkins,
I've killed you thrice.
You're dead, Eddie Perkins;
the first time I killed you was a treat.
You're dead, Eddie Perkins,
I've killed you thrice;
the second time I killed you on the street,
laughing at your pain.
You're dead, Eddie Perkins,
I've killed you thrice;
the final time I killed you was a cheat
from which there was no gain.
You lay between the creek and street,
skin rupturing as winter's sun broke
the frozen night. The lost gull, resting,
looks to your feet, dreams of the sea,
endless fish leaping,
mute witness to the boy's weeping.

You're dead,
Eddie Perkins.
I've killed
you thrice.
We have
all killed
you, let
you die
so many
times, as
we will
let your
sons die,
and theirs,
legions undone
by love's
failure.

Once, Eddie Perkins, I watched you
paint a landscape, a watercolor
of the low hills surrounding town,
old country roads leading down to
sandstone houses with flowered lawns,
where chickens, squirrels, weasels, dogs,
sparrows, foxes, cats and spring lambs
lay around. There were no people.
Not one. No cars, bicycles, swings, toys. Only
houses and animals,
as though sidewalks were for nuzzling
wolves and geese to stroll upon, the
peace broken only by thousands
of carefully drawn starlings, perched
like black leaves on small budded
trees, each mouth parted in silent skrilch.
The next day you knocked over a
gas station, got thirty dollars
and five years in Bucks County Jail.

Where are your paintings now,
Eddie Perkins?
Does the boy who cried
have them hanging on his wall,
or are they as lost as you,
pictures with no people
which no people will ever see?
And where are the dwellers
of that painted town?
Did they never live
in your created world,
or had they gone to a wall
in payment for neglect,
Eddie Perkins?

You're dead,
Eddie Perkins.
I've killed you thrice,
and you keep rising to be slain anew,
slaughtered in a thousand ways
by a world you must rise against,
reborn, snarling,
to paint with talon hands
murals of its extinction,
burning cities, broken towns,
as swarming crowds spread out
across a countryside
they have been too long denied,
their eyes reflecting a rising sun
over a smouldering America
promising to awake from nightmare. ■

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Greenfield, MA



Mathew Richards

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